

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 260856Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1538

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

CINCPACREPPHIL

13TH AF CLARK

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 1302

E.O. 11652: GDS

H

GS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, MARR, RP

SUBJECT: MARTIAL LAW III

REF: (A) MANILA A-416, DECEMBER 13, 1974, (B) MANILA A-315,
NOVEMBER 1.- 1973.

1. FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY OF AIRGRAM ASSESSING THIRD YEAR OF
MARTIAL LAW: THIS AIRGRAM ANALYZES THE THIRD YEAR OF MARTIAL
LAW IN THE PHILIPPINES. IN CONCLUDES THAT THE YEAR'S
MOST SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS WERE BLUNDERS BY
PRESIDENT MARCOS, INCLUDING THE ABORTIVE MILITARY PURGE
AND THE DISMISSAL OF EXECUTIVE SECRETARY MELCHOR,
WHICH RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT MARCOS' LEADERSHIP ABILITY AND
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CAPACITY TO MANAGE PROBLEMS OF INTEREST TO US. LACK OF AN ADE-

QUATE SUCCESSION ARRANGEMENT REAMINS THE NEW SOCIETY'S MOST CONSPICIOUS INSTITUTIONAL FAILING. MRS. MARCOS' GREATLY EXPANDED AND RECENTLY INSTITUTIONALIZED ROLE STRENGTHENS HER CLAIM TO BE CONSIDERED HER HUSBAND'S SUCCESSOR, ALTHOUGH WE DOUBT THE MILITARY WOULD SUPPORT HER BID FOR POWER. EFFORTS TO EXPAND POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE BARANGAY AND SANGGUNIANG BAYAN, AND MOST RECENTLY THE LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COUNCIL AND NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SANGGUNIANG BAYANS WERE ESSENTIALLY COSMETIC. MARCOS REFUSESTO ALLOW HIS POWERS TO BE DELIMITED.

2. THE GAP BETWEEN THE NEW SOCIETY'S RHETORIC AND ITS ABILITY TO ENACT NEEDED REFORMS IS WIDENING. DESPITE INCREASING AWARENESS OF THE REGIME'S FAILURE TO ACHIEVE ITS "SOCIAL EQUITY" OBJECTIVE, DISCONTENTS IS INSUFFICIENTLY WIDESPREAD AND COCUSSED TO THREATEN MARCOS. THE PHILIPPINE MILITARY CONTINUES TO GROW IN SIZE AND INFLUENCE. WHILE THE ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES (AFP) REMAINS PLEASED WITH PRESIDENTIAL PRIORITIES, MARCOS COULD ENCOUNTER PROBLEMS IN FULLY SATISFYING THE MILITARY'S RISING EXPECTATIONS SHOULD THE ECONOMY NOT PICK UP AND GOVERNMENT REVENUES FALL OFF. DURING 1975, THE LEGAL OPPOSITION, DESPITE SOME SUCCESS IN GARNERING PUBLICITY ABROAD, BECAME WEAKER AND MORE DIVIDED. THE CHURCH, WHICH HAS THE POTENTIAL FOR SIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION, HAS NOT BEEN RELUCTANT TO CRITICIZE THE REGIME PUBLICLY ON SPECIFIC ISSUES, MOST NOTABLY THE TOTAL STRIKE BAN AND TORTURE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS. NONETHELESS, CHURCH LEADERSHIP SEEKS TO KEEP OPEN CONFRONTATION WITH THE REGIME TO A MINIMUM. DESPITE SOME RECENT STIRRING ON CAMPUS, THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS REMAIN GENERALLY QUIESCENT.

3. WITH THE NOTABLE EXCEPTION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POOR HANDLING OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARKETING OF SUGAR, THE ECONOMY PERFORMED FAIRLY WELL IN 1975 DESPITE INTERNATIONAL RECESSION AND GREW AN ESTIMATED 5.9 PERCENT PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE OF GOOD WEATHER AND BUMPER CROPS. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF A \$1.1 BILLION TRADE DEFICIT, THE GOP RAN A HALF-BILLION DOLLAR BOP DEFICIT, THE FIRST SINCE MARTIAL

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LAW. IT WILL FACE AN EVEN HARDER ECONOMIC TASK IN 1976.

4. THE MUSLIM SECESSION PROBLEM REMAINS UNSOLVED BUT THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN RESTRICTING THE GROWTH OF THE NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY (NPA). THERE HAS BEEN A NOTICEABLE DECLINE IN THE NEW SOCIETY'S LAW AND ORDER DIVIDED WITH SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN CRIMES AGAINST PROPERTY AND PERSONS.

5. IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, PRESIDENT MARCOS MADE CLEAR, ESPECIALLY DURING THE VISIT OF PRESIDENT FORD IN EARLY DECEMBER, THAT SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE US REMAIN THE KEYSTONE OF PHILIPPINE SECURITY POLICY. THIS SUGGESTS THAT THE PHILIPPINE POSTURE IN BASE AND ECONOMIC NEGOTIATIONS THIS SPRING MAY BE MORE ACCOMMODATING AND REALISTIC THAN SEEMED LIKELY FOLLOWING THE INDO-CHINA COLLAPSE AND MARCOS' STRONG PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THESE AGREEMENTS LAST SUMMER. OUR MAJOR PROBLEM THE THE GOP CONTINUES TO BE IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS. MARCOS IS AWARE OF THE FEELINGS THIS ISSUE AROUSES, ESPECIALLY IN THE US CONGRESS, AND WE DO NOT HESITATE TO REMIND HIM THAT FLOUTING WIDELY ACCEPTED STANDARDS OF JUSTICE RUNS SERIOUS RISK OF JEOPARDIZING US ASSISTANCE LEVELS.

6. WE PROJECT THAT FOR THE SHORT TERM AT LEAST MARCOS WILL REMAIN FIRMLY IF MARGINALLY MORE UNEASILY IN THE SADDLE, BASED LARGELY ON HIS RELATIVELY SKILLFUL MANIPULATION OF THE INSTRUMENTS OF POWER, AS WELL AS ON THE LACK OF A MILITANT OR EVEN UNITED OPPOSITION. IN THE ONGER RUN, PROSPECTS OF THE MARCOS REGIME SEEM LIKELY TO TURN HEAVILY ON ITS ABILITY TO MANAGE THE NATION'S GROWING PROBLEMS WITHOUT INCREASING THE AVERAGE FILIPINO'S SENSE OF DEPRIVATION AND ALIENATION OR HIS AWARENESS OF THE WIDENING GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR. MUCH TOO WILL DEPEND ON MARCOS' DEXTERITY IN ENSURING THAT OPPRESSION, INEVITABLE UNDER AN AUTHORITARIAN REGIME SUCH AS HIS, DOES NOT EXCEED TOLERABLE LIMITS. MEANWHILE, THE AFP, CIVILIAN CONTROLLED BUT INCREASINGLY ENTRENCHED, DEVELOPS ITS TASTE FOR AT LEAST THE TRAPPINGS OF POWER. ABROAD WE EXPECT MARCOS TO BE INCREASINGLY ACTIVE OVER THE NEXT PERIOD, TRAVELING MORE FREQUENTLY

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OUT OF THE COUNTRY, ASSUMING A MORE PROMINENT ROLE AFTER SUHARTO, ENJOYING THE ASIAN STATESMAN IMAGE AND EMPLOYING IT FOR POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT AT HOME AND PRESUMABLY ALSO WITH THE US.

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